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ORATION,

Pronounced before a
NUMEROUS BODY
OF THE
NOBILITY and GENTRY,

Assembled at the
MUSICK-HALL in *Fishamble-street*,
On *Tuesday* the 6th of this instant *December*,
And now first Published at their unanimous
Desire.

By THOMAS SHERIDAN, A.M. *Trainer of*
Location
THE SECOND EDITION.

D U B L I N :

Printed for M. WILLIAMSON, Bookseller in *Dame-*
street, over-against *Sycamore-alley*.

M D C C L V I I.

ORATION

Delivered before a

NUMEROUS BODY

OF THE

NOBILITY AND GENTRY

ALBANY



And now first published at their unanimous

H. THOMAS SHEPARD A.M.

THE SECOND EDITION

DUBLIN

Printed for M. WILKINSON, Bookseller in Dublin

MCCCLXXXV



AN
ORATION
Pronounced before a numerous Body
OF THE
NOBILITY
AND
GENTRY, &c.



WHEN I reflect on the Novelty of this Attempt; when I consider what an Appearance of Vanity and Presumption it must carry, for one in my low Sphere of Life, to invite together, Men of distinguished Birth, Learning and Wisdom, in order to hear his Sentiments upon Matters of the highest Importance; I own I need many Apologies, and more Art than I am Master of, to conciliate your Favour at my setting out, and obtain

an indulgent Attention to that which I have to propose. On the other Hand, when I consider, that what I have to offer, appears to me to be of the utmost Consequence to the good of this Country, and when I look round this Assembly, I am encouraged to proceed ; secure of your Approbation and Assistance, if what I have to say be founded in Reason and Truth ; certain of Indulgence and Pardon, for the Sake of the Intention, should my Judgment prove Erroneous.

But I have still a more powerful Motive to my present Undertaking ; a Motive, which will not suffer me to be silent without being criminal : For what I have to propose is not with a View merely to contribute to the Service of my Country, but to prevent the Growth of an Evil, which may probably bring on the Ruin of *Ireland*, if speedy and effectual Means are not used to put a Stop to it.

I know with how bad a Grace a Declaration of this Sort must come from the Mouth of so mean a Member of the Commonwealth : I know it will be said, who made you a Judge of these Matters ? Why should you pretend to be wiser than the rest of Mankind ? Or how are you intitled to meddle with Affairs so far above your Reach ? Such, I know, will be the Voice of the World. It was for this Reason that I wished to deliver my Thoughts first before a select Assembly ; who will hear with Candour, and judge without Prejudice ; who know that the greatest Things have often taken Rise from small Beginnings ; and that Providence has frequently used the meanest Instruments to bring about the greatest Events ; who will consider the Merits of the Matter laid before them, without Reference to the Person who

who delivers it; whose Determination, in short, on account of the high Estimation in which they are held by the World, must be final with regard to me, as it certainly will be with respect to the Publick. Such an Assembly, I say, I wished first to appear before; and would to Heaven, my Wishes with regard to the Point I have in View, were equally accomplished with that.

But as this will, in a great Measure, lie in your Breasts, I shall, without farther Preface, enter upon the Matter in Hand; only first most humbly entreating you to believe, whatever may be the Issue of the Attempt, that my only Motive to it was a Sense of my Duty: In such a Case, before such Judges, that Thought may not a little dissipate my Fears; as I can be under no Apprehension of Censure, tho' I should unfortunately be judged not to merit Applause.

I said that the chief Motive which spurred me on at present to this Attempt, was the Apprehension that this Country may probably be ruined, if speedy and effectual Means are not used to prevent it. And as this is to arise from a Cause which has but lately made its Appearance, whose Operations are not immediately perceptible by us, being in another Kingdom; whose Progress has been rapid in a short Space of Time, tho' it has not hitherto been taken notice of, nor given us the least Alarm; the Danger is on these Accounts the greater, and consequently the Necessity more pressing, of making the Discovery known. I think it my Duty therefore humbly to lay before you the Grounds of these my Apprehensions: Wherein I pretend to no extraordinary Sagacity, nor claim any farther Merit than what a Traveller might do, who, accidentally passing over an high Hill, should discover an approaching Storm, of which

no Symptom might appear to the Inhabitants of the Vale. And indeed the Knowledge I obtained of this, was owing to some Casual Observations made by me, during a late Residence of two Years in *England*.

It must be allowed by all, who know any thing of the State of *Ireland*, that one of the chief Sources of the Miseries of this Kingdom, is the Number of Absentees. This has been occasioned by many Causes, too obvious to need being mentioned : Nor are those Causes likely to abate suddenly of their Vigour. But if to these there should be added a new Cause, more powerful than all the rest ; that should not only increase the Number of Absentees, but in Time, make the Fashion almost general, thro' our Nobility and Gentry, there is no one so short sighted, who must not immediately see, that this would bring on the irretrievable Ruin of this Country.

That such a Cause has begun to operate most powerfully, cannot be doubted by any one, who has had an Opportunity of knowing, what Swarms of young Gentlemen have been sent, within these few Years, from *Ireland*, to receive their first Rudiments of Learning in the great Schools of *England*. From the best Information I could receive, there are upwards of an hundred from this Country now at *Westminster* and *Eaton* ; besides Numbers at other Schools of Eminence. Whereas it is not many Years since there were but four Boys from *Ireland* at *Westminster*, and not more at *Eaton*. Should this Fashion therefore continue to encrease in the same Proportion (and there are powerful Reasons to believe that it will, unless proper Means are used to prevent it) what must the necessary Consequence be ? will not the greatest Part of our Nobility, and Gentry,

try, receive their whole Education in *England*? For they who are trained in their Schools, will certainly finish their Course of Studies in their Universities. And what is to be expected from young Men, who leave their own Country too early in Life, to have any Love for it, grounded upon rational Principles; whose waxen Minds receive their first and deepest Impressions in another; whose first Years of rational Life are there employed, there form their Acquaintance, their Friendships, and their social Ties; what, I say, is to be expected from them, but that they will look upon that as their Country; there fix their Settlements, where their dearest Connections are, and, by marrying into *English* Families, make a perpetual Alienation, not only of themselves, but of their Posterity for ever, from their native Country? And, when we reflect also, how many stronger Inducements on other Accounts, how many more powerful Allurements they will have to detain them there; and that, in point of Duty, they may plead an equal Tie to the Mother Country, we shall have the more reason to believe that such will be the Event.

Should the Case be so, what then must be the Condition of this unhappy Kingdom? Not only drained annually of its Rents, without any Return, but deprived of those Members who have it most in their Power to contribute to its Advancement; and whose Presence and Encouragement, are absolutely necessary to diffuse a Spirit of Industry thro' the People. What indeed is to be expected, but a gradual Decay of all the noble Improvements made by the unwearied efforts of a truly PATRIOT SOCIETY! Such as cannot be matched, in an equal Space of Time, in any Age or Country! And a Restoration of the Poverty, Misery and Barbarism, in which the 1st of *July* 1690, saw this Land immersed?

Is there a Lover of *Ireland* who is not struck with Horror at the Thought? Is there a Man born here, is there who eats the Bread of *Ireland*, is there one who considers the true Interest of *England*, who does not wish the Prevention of so great an Evil? Certainly there is not. The true Way to prevent it is, to examine into the Causes of the Increase of this fatal Custom, and then to proportion the Remedy to those Causes.

As I made it my Business to converse with many Parents upon the Subject, who chose to give their Sons an *English* Education, I found there were two different Motives to it, chiefly urged by different Persons. The first was, a View to laying the Foundation of their Sons future Fortunes, by the Opportunities which they should have of forming early Friendships with the Sons of great Men, who might have it in their Power to promote them as they advanced in Life, and came themselves into Power. The second was, the want of publick Schools of Reputation in *Ireland*, and the great Characters, which the present Masters of the chief Schools in *England*, universally, and deservedly bore.

With respect to the first of these Motives, there are no very bad Consequences to be apprehended from it; because, in the first Place, there are few likely to be sent upon that Principle, but younger Brothers, or such as have their Fortunes to make: Who, if they should succeed in their Design, would probably be sent back to us again, as Promotion by Means of Interest on the other Side of the Water might be obtained with much more Ease in this Kingdom, than in *England*. In the next Place, this Motive is not likely to be either general in its Influence or of any long

long Duration. The great Expence attending a School Education in *England*, will deter most Parents from sending their younger Sons, upon so precarious a Prospect; and as it's Foundation is rather chimerical, it probably will not stand long. For in Truth it is no other than this; the late casual Rise of a few to high Employments, *wholly* attributed, though very *erroneously*, to Friendships contracted at School. So that the Disappointment which is likely to attend most of those, who proceed upon this Principle, will probably put an End to the Custom.

But if the second Motive be well founded, and should operate accordingly, there is every Thing to be dreaded from it. If Parents of Rank, and Fortune, are once thoroughly persuaded, that they cannot obtain a *good* Education for their Sons in this Country, they probably will, and certainly ought, to send them to that Place in which the best can be procured; nor can they answer it to their Duty to do otherwise. That such an Opinion has of late pretty generally prevailed, is a Matter of too great Notoriety to need any Proof. No one can be ignorant of it, who has heard the Subject started. Or if it was requisite, there is a glaring, melancholy Proof, in the Numbers of young Gentlemen from this Country, who now adorn the Schools and Colleges of *England*; to the Depopulation of the most excellent University of *Dublin*. For whatever Causes may have been assigned for the late remarkable Decrease in the College of *Dublin*, in point of Numbers, that is *evidently* the true one. An Education begun at *Westminster* or *Eaton*, will of course be finished at *Oxford* or *Cambridge*; and nothing can be more clear, than, that in the same Proportion as those Universities are increased in their Numbers from this Kingdom, that of *Dublin* must decline.

It is to be feared, that the Reason assigned by Parents for their Conduct in this Respect, is but too well founded. It is certain, that we have no public Schools of Reputation in *Ireland*, notwithstanding there are many large Endowments; too large indeed, which has probably been the Occasion of their Ruin. For the Possessors of them, finding their Stipends sufficient to furnish them, not only with the Necessaries, but with all the Comforts of Life, have no Spur to their Industry, and naturally prefer a State of Ease and Tranquillity, to the troublesome Discharge of one of the most laborious Employments in the World. It is certain also, that the publick Schools in *England* never were in such high Reputation, and probably never had Masters of such distinguished Abilities, to preside over them. It therefore cannot be a Matter of Wonder, whilst such a great Disparity remains, that the Preference should be given to them. I would not here be understood to assert that there are no good Schools in *Ireland*; there may be many, and I myself have a personal Knowledge of a few Masters who are well qualified to discharge that important Office. But still they are at the Head of private Schools only, and their Reputation is proportionably circumscribed; they depend chiefly on the Neighbourhood for Supplies, and on the Recommendation of a few Friends to whom their Merit is known. This can have but little Effect on those who live at any Distance, or who are unacquainted with their Characters: On which account Parents in general, not having sufficient Reasons for a Preference, are contented to take up with that School which happens to be nearest to them; to which they are the rather induced, both from the Cheapness of the Education, and an Opportunity of having their Children bred up under their own Eye. And when it is known, that the far greater Number of these Masters, are not such, as
have

have been chosen into this Employment, on account of their Talents; or such as voluntarily undertook it from a Consciousness of their own Abilities, with a Prospect of making a Figure in that Sphere; but such, as having in spite of Nature, been dragged through an University Education, and finding themselves after taking a Degree, without Interest or Prospect of any Provision, are forced to have Recourse to that Way of Life to avoid starving; the Education of young Gentlemen, under such Preceptors, cannot fail of producing very bad Effects, and bringing a general Discredit on the Schools of *Ireland*.

From what has been said, it is obvious that nothing can put a Stop to that growing Evil, whose Consequences are so much to be dreaded by us, but such a Reformation in our Schools as will put them at least upon an equal footing with those in *England*. But if, at the same Time, a Method could be found out, whereby, not only that Point might be effected, but our *whole* System of Education should be render'd more complete, in *every* Branch, than is to be found either in the rest of the *British* Dominions, or in any Part of *Europe*; no one will hesitate to allow, that this would not only put an End to all Apprehensions of Ruin, from the Cause before mentioned, but would be the most speedy and probable Means of making this Country flourish; of raising it to a State of Honour, Wealth and Power.

The great and wise Bishop of *Cloyne*, in his Queries relative to *Ireland*, has the following remarkable ones. "Whether a *wise* Nation has any Thing *nearer* at Heart than the *Education* of their *Youth*? "Whether it would not be worth while to establish *here* a *Mart* of Literature *beyond* any in *Europe*; "and whether this would not be a sure Means of "bringing *Men* and *Money* into our Country?"

Nor

Nor would this be so difficult a Point to execute as may be at first imagined. We have already one Part of Education (and that too a most essential one) in as high a Degree of Perfection, as perhaps could have been contrived by the Wit of Man. I mean that Part which is obtained in the College of *Dublin*, from the Time of Entrance, to the Time of taking a Bachelor's Degree. Nothing can be conceived more excellent than the first Plan of that Part of the System, in Point of Theory, and Design; but in Point of Execution and Practice, it has received uncommon Life and Vigour by the late admirable Institution of Præmiums. * ' Whose Author, had he never contributed any Thing farther to the Good of his Country, would have deserved immortal Honour, and must have been held in Reverence by latest Posterity. But the unwearied and disinterested Endeavours, during a long course of Years, of this truly good Man, in a Variety of Branches, to promote Industry, and consequently the Welfare of this Kingdom; and the mighty Benefits which have thence resulted to the Community; have made many of the good People of *Ireland* sorry, that a long talked of Scheme has not hitherto been put in Execution: That we might not appear inferior in Point of Gratitude to the Citizens of *London*, with respect to a singular Honour paid to a † Fellow Citizen, (surely not with more Reason) and that, like them, we might be able to address our Patriot,

• *Præsentī tibi maturos largimur honores.*

• If

• It was intended that the following Passage should have been spoken, but it was omitted upon seeing that the good Man himself was present, lest it might offend his Delicacy.

† Alluding to the Statue of Sir *John Barnard*, erected at the *Royal Exchange* in *London*.

“ If I have wandered a little from the Point, it
 “ proceeded from a Warmth of Heart eager to throw
 “ in its Mite of Acknowledgement to our general Be-
 “ nefactor; and I am sure there is not one here, who
 “ does not so far sympathize with me, as readily to
 “ pardon the Digression. But to return to my Sub-
 “ ject.

Upon an impartial Enquiry, I am firmly persuad-
 ed, it would be found, that the present Course of
 Education in the College of *Dublin*, is in itself supe-
 rior to that of any in *Europe* of the same Kind; and
 if it has not manifested itself so to the World by its
 Fruits, it is intirely owing to two Causes; the first, is
 a Neglect of that Part of Education which is prepa-
 ratory to it; the second, a total Want of that Part
 which should finish the Gentleman. From the first
 of these Causes very bad Consequences must follow,
 and the end of that excellent Institution, be, in a
 great Measure, defeated. For if young Gentlemen
 are not well founded in Latin and Greek, when they
 enter the College, the Tutors must of Necessity take
 upon *themselves* the Office of *Schoolmasters*; with the
 double Labour of unteaching them vicious Habits,
 as well as setting them right. Thus a great Porti-
 on of the Time, which ought to be employed in
 academick Studies only, must be given up to restore
 what was previously lost at School; to the great
 Hindrance of a due Progress in the Sciences taught
 in the College. Nor indeed are the early Impressions,
 with respect to School Learning, easily to be changed.
 If the Plant be not properly managed in the Nursery,
 it will hardly ever prove a good Tree.

From the second of these Causes, *the Want of*
proper Places to finish the Education of a Gentleman,
 (a De-

(a Defect under which the *English* labour as much as we) it is a Doubt whether all the principal Evils of these Countries do not flow.

Suppose therefore that these two Defects were remedied; that the Schools were put upon as good a Footing as those of our Neighbours, and rendered suitable Preparatives to the excellent System of the College; and that afterwards a Method should be found to finish the Education of a Gentleman more completely here, than in any of the Academies abroad: must it not be allow'd that this would be the most effectual Method of keeping our Youth at Home? as there could be no Doubt in such a Case, but that the *whole* System of Education here, would be more perfect than any in the known World?

But if to this System there should be other Studies added, of more Importance, and real Use to *British* Subjects, than all the rest; if the Study of the *English* Language went Hand in Hand with those of *Greece* and *Rome*, and the long lost Art of Oratory were revived, (the great Utility of which I shall not now expatiate on, as I have *already* given my Thoughts upon that Point to the Public) can there be any doubt that we should not only detain our own Youth at Home, but that we should draw Numbers from different Quarters of the World, to receive their Education here, either in whole, or in Part?

Would it not then evidently be the Interest of the Gentlemen of *Scotland* and *Wales*, I mean such as would otherwise send their Sons to *England* for Education, to give this Country the Preference, where *English* and the Art of Speaking would be systematically taught, without which Experience shews

shews it is impossible they can ever get the better of their first vitiated Pronunciation? How many Gentlemen of those Countries now lament the Want of such an Opportunity in their early Days, when they find themselves disabled, on Account of that Defect, from making such a Figure in publick Assemblies, as their Talents, Knowledge, and Literature would otherwise intitle them to? and can we suppose, that, had they an Opportunity, they would not endeavour to remedy a Defect in their Sons, which they have so sensibly felt in themselves? Is it not reasonable to believe, considering our Situation, that we should be supplied with Numbers from *America*, and the *British* Colonies Abroad? especially when we reflect that the Form of the *British* Constitution is established in most of them; and that a Knowledge of the *English* Language, and Oratory, are equally necessary to them, to make a Figure in their several Assemblies. Nor can it be doubted but that the *English* themselves (however fond they may be of their own Schools and Universities) would at least in the last Branch of Education, give us the Preference to Countries, where either *republican* or *arbitrary* Principles of Government prevail; provided we had an *Academy here*, equal in other Points to those abroad, and superior in the two most important of all others. Nay when a complete Knowledge of those Points which would contribute most to the Profit, Honour, and Delight of every *Englishman* of Fortune, could be no other where regularly acquired. If to all this we were to add, that as the *English* Language has of late obtained great Vogue in several Countries of *Europe*; is considered by many of the *literati* as a classical Language; and studied by them with infinite Pains and Industry, (tho' but with little Proficiency, on Account of its not having yet been taught by Rule) it would not be at all surprising.

ing, that many *Foreigners* should come to learn it in a Place, where they might acquire a Knowledge of it with Ease, Speed, and Certainty.

It may be said, that taking all this for granted, and supposing that all these good Effects would follow from the Execution of such a Plan, yet the impracticability of the Design itself, must render all Attempts towards it fruitless. Indeed at first View the Difficulties appear great, and almost insurmountable. Innovations of all Kinds must make their Way thro' Opposition: Reformation is hateful to the Bulk of Mankind; and Changes in any established Modes, especially those of Education, are not easily brought about. The Disappointments which have attended Numbers of ill concerted, or ill executed Schemes, have thrown a general *Discredit* upon all *new* Attempts: They are immediately classed under the common Name of Projects; to the Idea of Project, that of ill Success is associated; and this generally puts a Stop to the Progress of any Design, to the Completion of which the Concurrence of Numbers is necessary. And yet, on the other Hand, what would be the State of this Country at this Day, were it not for Innovations? Were it not for the Execution of new Schemes, which at first might have passed for Projects, for mere Chimeras of the Brain; but afterwards were realized, and obtained more honourable Appellations from Success. And indeed, as all Improvements in a Country must arise from the Introduction of new Arts, or new Methods in those which were before established, it is a Pity that the Bulk of Mankind are so prejudiced against Innovations. To this, as I said before, the ill Success of Schemists has chiefly contributed, by infusing a general Doubtfulness, which is of all others the greatest Drawback upon Action. And this ill Success has not so often
arisen

arisen from any Defect in the Scheme itself, as the Want of weighing the proper Means, and the Power that is requisite to put it in Execution. For the Utility of a Design to the publick Good may be seen and acknowledged by all the World, and yet be not at all the nearer being reduced to practice. The Author may be praised, and his Ingenuity commended; and yet he will be classed among the Projectors, if the Scheme go no farther than Theory. To the Success of any new Plan designed for publick Benefit, two Things are chiefly necessary: First, the Goodness of the Design itself; and 2dly, the Power to execute it. Where these two coincide, or are met in one and the same Person, Success is sure. But where the Execution depends upon others, the best and most useful Designs, may, and often have fallen to the Ground. And this, of all others, has been the most fruitful Source of Disappointments: For the Authors of those Schemes are apt to build too much upon their acknowledged Utility to the publick Good, and to suppose that the World, for their own Sakes, will put them in Execution; But they might have learned better, by attending to the old Proverb, *that what is every one's Business, is nobody's Business*. Suppose, for Instance, that a well concerted Plan with Respect to Education, were laid before the Publick; that all Mankind should not only acknowledge that nothing could contribute more to the Welfare and Prosperity of this Country in general, and of each Individual in particular, but also that the Scheme itself, was to the last Degree feasible, and easily reducible to Practice.—would this ensure the Success of it? I am far from thinking that it would. It might for some Time be a Topic of general Conversation; every one would wish it Success, and when it was blown over, might say it was a Pity it was not put in Execution

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What therefore would be the most likely Method to make such a Design prosper? I know but of one, which Experience in the like Cases has warranted; a Method to which the chief Improvements in this Country, in other Points, have been owing; I mean an Union amongst Gentlemen of Fortune and Understanding, to promote the Scheme with their Interest, their Counsel, and personal Attention to it, in its Progress. *In short, a Society established for the Improvement of Education*, upon the same Plan with the many other excellent Societies now subsisting in this Kingdom. And surely there never was one begun upon a nobler Principle, that would answer more excellent Purposes, or confer greater Honour on it's Members.

This is so evident, that were a Proposal of that Kind to come from a Person of Weight and Consequence, there is no Doubt but that Hundreds would immediately embark in it; and when I consider my own Insignificancy, much I fear that the Meanness of the Proposer, may throw a Discredit on the Design. And yet, Gentlemen, with your Permission, I will endeavour to shew that I am not altogether unqualified for such a Task. I know how difficult a Point it is to speak of one's Self; I know with how bad a Grace any Thing in our own Favour, comes from our own Mouths; and yet there are Cases where it is not only allowable, but necessary; not only pardonable, but praise-worthy. Whether mine be of that Number, you will the better judge when you have heard what I have to say. I know that the Course of Life which I have led for some Years, seemingly so different from the Matter in Hand, will be far from prejudicing People in general, in Favour of my Abilities, to execute such a Design; but if I shew that it is that *very*
Course

Course of Life which has afforded me the chief Lights ; nay, that I should not, probably, had I pursued any other, have been able to make such a Proposal with any Prospect of Success, I hope what I shall say upon that Head will not appear superfluous. Relying therefore on your Candour, for a favourable Interpretation, I will adventure into this dangerous Path.

It is not yet forgotten that my Father's Employment was the Education of Youth ; nor was he amongst the least eminent in his Profession. As I ever esteemed that to be one of the most useful and honourable Stations in Life, I resolved to make Choice of it for mine. It was therefore the chief Point I had in View in my Course of Reading.

As I had passed the two most important Years, in finishing my School Studies at *Westminster*, I was not the worse qualified for the Undertaking ; and as I had my Father's Reputation to build upon, and some very advantageous Proposals made to me upon that Head, I had the most flattering Prospect of Success, and should certainly have entered upon the Office, immediately after taking my Degree of Master of Arts, but for one Objection. Upon the maturest Deliberation, I thought I saw a great Deficiency in our early Part of Education ; and that too in some of the most essential Points. 'Till I should be able to remedy this, I determined not to enter upon the Employment ; and, not liking the beaten Way, resolved to pass some Time in search of a new Path. That which chiefly gave my Mind this Turn, was a Conversation which I once had with Dr. *Swift*, soon after my Entrance into the College : He asked me what they taught there ? When I told him the Course of Reading I was put into, he asked me, Do they teach you English ? No. Do they teach you how to speak ?

No. Then, said he, they teach you *Nothing*. As I was instructed from my boyish Days to reverence him as one of a superior Class of Beings, his Sayings always passed with me for Oracles, and this particularly sunk deep into my Mind. In my Progress thro' the College, I had often Occasion to apply it, and long before I had finished my Course, was fully convinced that all our other Studies turn to little Advantage, to the Inhabitants of *Great-Britain*, and *Ireland*, thro' a Neglect of these. I then set to work to make myself Master, if possible, of those two necessary Branches; but was a long Time puzzled and perplexed in the Intricacies of a Labyrinth thro' which I could find no Clue. After much Time spent in this Way, at length I found, that there never could be any Settlement of the *English* Language, nor could it possibly be reduced to Rule, unless the Art of Speaking were first revived. The Grounds of this my Opinion, being already given to the Publick need not here be repeated; and as the Arguments there used, have never yet been confuted, but, on the contrary, have received Sanction from the Approbation of many judicious Persons, I have reason to believe that they were not ill founded. The revival of the long lost Art of Oratory, became, therefore, the first necessary Step towards my Design. A Task of so arduous a Nature, so surrounded with Difficulties, as would have deterred any one from the Attempt, who was less zealous in the Pursuit of his Point. In my first Motions towards it, I was only groping my Way in the Dark, and my Journey ended in a Chaos, where there could not be said to be Light, but, as *Milton* expresses it, rather Darkness visible.

At length I found that *Theory* alone would never bring me far on my Way; and that continual *Practice* must be added to furnish me with Lights to conduct me to my Journey's End. To
obtain

obtain this, there was but one Way open, which was the *Stage*. A Way indeed so thorny, so dangerous, so full of Precipices, that nothing but my eager Pursuit of the Point in View, could have made me venture into it. But to come at that precious Ore, I scrupled not to dig myself in the Mine. I would not here insinuate that I think the Profession of an Actor in itself mean or contemptible; on the contrary, I know of few, (the three great ones excepted) which might contribute more to publick Benefit, and which consequently should be more intitled to a proportionable Share of publick Esteem. But the miserable State in which I found the Stage, and the Meanness of the Performers at that Time, had brought the Profession itself into such a Degree of Contempt, as was sufficient to deter a young Man of any Spirit, who had gone thro' an entire Course of a liberal Education, from entering into it. But indeed I pursued the Point I had in View with so enthusiastick a Warmth, that neither Danger nor Difficulty, not Contempt nor Ignominy itself, unmerited, could have frightened me from my Purpose. That such was my Motive for striking suddenly into a Course, seemingly so devious to all my Friends, was known only to two Persons. One of them, to my irreparable Loss, is since dead, I mean the great and good Dr. *Forester*. The other, who was my * Tutor during the latter Years of my Residence in the College, is still alive, and can bear Testimony to the Truth of what I say.

I had been some Years on the Stage without making any considerable Progress in my Design, and almost began to despair; when a casual Necessity I was under, after having taken the Management of the Theatre into my own Hands, of laying out great Part of my Time in giving what Assistance and Instructi-

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* The Rev. Dr. HENRY CLARKE.

ons I could to some young Performers, threw new Lights upon me, and became the Means of first laying open to my View some of the fundamental Principles of the Art; and those once known, it was not difficult thro' Time and Application to trace the whole System. So that it is now some Years, since I could have undertaken to shew, that the Art of Oratory, might have been taught in these Kingdoms, upon as certain Principles, and with as good a Prospect of Success, as it ever was by the Rhetoricians of *Greece* or *Rome*; or as the Arts of Musick, Painting, &c. are now taught by their several Professors.

If it be asked, why I neglected so long to attempt the Execution of a Point, which I have already declared to have been the chief Object of all my Actions, and Pursuits in Life; As the Question is pertinent and just, I hope the Answer will not be thought unnecessary. The Truth is, I had involved myself too far in my other Undertaking, to be able to withdraw at my own Pleasure. After I had been a few Years on the Stage, as I mentioned before, despairing of Success in the main Point, which induced me to enter into that Course of Life, I thought, however, I might do an acceptable Piece of Service to the Publick, by endeavouring to establish an orderly and regular Stage. Youth and Inexperience, joined to a Temper which had more of Warmth than Prudence in it, made me blind to the innumerable Difficulties which lay in my Way; alas! I foresaw not then the thousandth Part of what I have since endured. The miserable State in which I found the Theatre in Point of Wardrobe, Scenes, and all Manner of Conveniencies, required the disbursement of large Sums to supply those Deficiencies; and the many Incumbrances which a long Course of Mismanagement had brought upon the Stage, would have shewn to one, better skilled in Calculation,

lation, that there were no probable Expectations of Profit for many Years to come. Add to all this the Loss of a considerable Sum in my first necessary Attempt to fix the Stage on a solid Foundation; that brought a Debt upon me which the Labour of some years could not erase. Thus I found, that to look back was vain; the Rubicon was passed, and there was no retreating; my Condition for some Years afterwards could be compared only to that of a gally Slave, I was chained to an Oar, the Time of my Deliverance uncertain, but the necessary Condition of Liberty must be incessant labour till the Hour arrived.

In this disagreeable, this toilsome Course of Life, I was still cheered with a Prospect that my Labours would be crown'd with Success; with the Accomplishment of both the Points I had in view. The first more immediate one, that of establishing a regular Stage, upon a solid and lasting Foundation. The second, that of contributing by this very Means to the ultimate End before mentioned. For I considered that such Theatre might supply no inconsiderable Helps to an Academy. The same Man who led the Band there, might be the Instructor in Musick: The same who prelied over the Scene-painting, might be the Preceptor in Drawing; and the same who gave most Pleasure by his Performance on the Stage, might be the properest master in dancing. The double Encouragement which in this Case they would receive, might at all Times secure to us some of the best Masters in *Europe*, in those several Arts. Besides, as I had intended to erect a small Academy purposely for the regular Instruction of young Persons, who were possessed of Genius and Talents for the Stage, and who should have all proper helps towards fitting them for that Profession, it might be hoped in time,

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that

that the Theatre would become an admirable Assistant to the School of Oratory, by furnishing to the young Students constant good Models and Examples in all the different species of Eloquence. But just as I pleased myself with the near View of the Accomplishment of these my Designs, just as the Edifice, which I thought founded on a Rock, was nearly completed, and the Attick Story only wanting, an Earth-quake Came, and in one night reduced the long laboured Pile to an heap of Ruins. Thus at once were all my Hopes blasted. The only Fruits I reaped from a nine Years incessant toil both of Body and Mind, were the loss of a considerable Sum of Money, by the whole of my Undertaking and a broken Constitution. The former of those can be incontestably proved; the latter, I daily and too sensibly feel. When I look'd back, I had the melancholy View of having passed the best of my Days, with Loss to myself, and little Advantage to the World: When I looked forward, I had but a gloomy Prospect of retrieving what was passed, loaded as I was with an heavy Debt, and deprived by a Disorder brought on by too intense Application of the power of giving the necessary Attention to Business. I speak not this to excite Compassion, though my Case were it truly known, would probably be thought amongst the hardest, My Motive is to shew, that thus circumstanced, without Assistance, I cannot proceed. I should be sorry that an Art which cost me so much Pains to acquire, the Propagation of which appears to me to be fraught with the highest Benefits to the Publick, should perish with me. I am willing to employ the Residue of my Life and Remains of my Health, in doing the best Service in my poor Power to my Country. But in my present Situation I can no more venture to run any Risques. Before I take any farther Steps, I must first have an Assurance, that if my Plan meets with Approbation, it will also
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bid fair for Success. The best Assurance I know of, would arise from the Establishment of such a Society as was before mentioned. If that were once accomplished, I would lay my Plan before them. If it should appear to be such a one as I before represented, beneficial to the Publick, and easily practicable, I should hope for such Encouragement and Assistance, as they should think proper to give. If otherwise, as I have nothing to ask for myself, it would end only in so much Loss of time to them, and labour to me. And surely a few Hours passed in examining a Design, calculated to answer such noble Ends, would not be ill employed. The Ends proposed by it, amongst many others, are these; 1st. to qualify every young Gentleman to make a figure proportionable to his Talents, in whatever Profession or sphere of Life he shall make his Choice, or into which his Lot shall have cast him. Whether it be the Pulpit, the Senate-house, or the Bar; whether he seeks for Glory in the Field, or prefers the Quiet of a rural Life. 2dly. to qualify him in all the Accomplishments of a Gentleman to make a Figure in polite Life, and to assist him in acquiring a just Taste in the liberal Arts, founded upon Skill. Are there amongst the Nobility and Gentry any who would not wish their Sons thus trained? Can it be done in the *present* Course of Education? If not, *ought* not that to be *improved* and *enlarged*? What publick Benefits would result from such a Course of Education, need not be enumerated; it requires but little Reflection to see that it would be the shortest Way to make this one of the most flourishing Countries in the World. And as to the private Emoluments which would follow from it, that Parent must be exceedingly blind to his own Interest, who would not wish to see *such* a Course of Education established, as would enable his Son to make his own Way in the World, and provide for himself, when that was finished,

finished, independant of any farther Assistance of Money or of Interest. Whether this can be done in *the present* Course, or whether young Gentlemen are qualified by it to get their Bread in any Way of Life whatever, except that of turning School-masters, or private Tutors, may be left to the Determination of those who have had the Experience.

To all that has been said upon this Subject, there is an Objection ready to be started, by such as will not give themselves the Trouble of entering minutely into Disquisitions of this Nature, that if this really were a Point of such Importance to the publick Weal, as is pretended, it could not fail of having often been accurately discussed by the Pens of many able Men employed in the Service of their Country; and it must also some time or other have been thought worthy of the Attention of the Legislature. To this it may be replied, that if such an Argument be of any force, it will hold equally good against all *new* Attempts, and put a Stop to all Improvements whatsoever. But there is no Occasion to rest upon this Answer; for in fact some of the ablest Writers of these Realms, have employed their Pens in pointing out the great Defects in our present Mode of Education.

Amongst these are the celebrated names of *Milton, Clarendon, Locke, Berkeley, Swift, Addison* and many others. Nor has any one Writer treated of the Subject who has not allowed our System of Education to be highly faulty in the most essential Points.

And as to the Attention of the Legislature, it can be shewn, that there *was* a Time, when one of the best and wisest Parliaments that ever sat in *England*, under the influence of an able Minister, took this
Matter

Matter into the most serious Consideration. As this is a Point but little known, I shall beg Leave to lay before you an Account of it extracted from the 5th Vol. of the Parliamentary History. In Pages 337 and 338 of the Octavo Edition, printed at *London*, in 1751, may be found the following Passage :

‘ The Lord Admiral (*George Villiers Duke of Buckingham*) made a Motion to the House of Lords, that since the Education of Youth, especially of Quality and Worth, is a Matter of great Consequence ; therefore to provide that such Persons, in their tender Years, do not spend their Time fruitlessly, about the Town, or elsewhere, his Lordship wished that some good and fit Course might be taken for the Erection and Maintenance of an Academy for the Breeding and Bringing up of the Nobility and Gentry of this Kingdom, in their younger and tender Age ; and for a free and voluntary Contribution, from Persons of Honour and Quality for that Purpose.

‘ This Motion was generally liked and commended, and many grave and judicious Speeches were used by several Lords, touching the most considerable and material Points, and the perfect Accomplishment of this most honourable Project. Some concerning the *Place* where such an Academy should be placed and erected : Others, what Qualifications, Arts, Sciences, and Exercises should be there taught and practised ; then how to be maintained ; and to what Kind of young Gentlemen Freedom shall be given to resort or live there as they shall please ; with other Circumstances. And in Order that the Matters and Points aforesaid, might with more Conveniency be opened, and discussed, the House was adjourned during Pleasure.

‘ Afterwards

‘ Afterwards the House appointed a Committee to consider of the Academy afore-mentioned ; consisting of the *Prince*, the *Arch-Bishop* of *Canterbury*, the *Lord Chancellor*, the *Arch-Bishop* of *York*, the *Lord Treasurer*, the *Lord Admiral*, the *Earl of Oxford*, &c. the *Lord Chief Justice*, and the *Attorney General*, to attend them ; to meet in the Council Chamber at *White-Hall*.’

Pity it is, that the Debates and Proceedings upon this important Subject, were not taken down, and set forth at large ; as considerable Lights might have been derived from them, in case of any Attempt of the same Nature. But even from this compendious View, we may see that it was considered as an Affair of the utmost Consequence, when we reflect that the Parliament was adjourned, in order to give Leisure to the Members to discuss so weighty a Point ; and that upon the most mature Deliberation, the highest Personages of the State, with the Prince of *Wales* at their Head, were appointed of the Committee, to carry the Design into Execution.

That the Project fell to the Ground, was manifestly owing to the Feuds and Divisions, which, about that Time, broke out in Parliament. This Motion was made on the 5th of *March*, and the Proceedings against Sir *Giles Mompesson*, Lord *Verulam*, the *Bishop* of *Landaff*, Sir *Francis Mitchell*, and Sir *Henry Yelverton*, took up the whole Time and Attention of both Houses, from the Month of *March* ’till the 28th of the *May* following, when the Parliament was adjourned by the King, and was soon afterwards dissolved.

The Prosecution of the *Spanish Match*, and many troublesome Affairs during that Reign, were the Means of keeping this Matter dormant ; and the untimely End of the Duke of *Buckingham*, its Author, put the finishing Blow to it. That it was never afterwards revived, as it is much to be lamented, so, were it necessary, is it easily to be accounted for.

But instead of wasting Time about such speculative Points, let the only Consideration now be, how it may be reduced to Practice.

A Design, once thought so honourable, so necessary, by the whole Legislative Body, has not since changed its Nature ; nor has its Utility to the State been diminished by Time.

The Mode indeed of putting it into Execution, may be changed. A Society composed of learned, wise and honourable Members, to clear away all the Difficulties, and to build up an exact Model, would save the grand National Council much Trouble, and give them Leisure to attend to the more pressing Exigencies of the State. This is the Method by which some of the most beneficial Schemes for the good of these Realms, have for many Years past been successfully conducted. Not to mention those in *England*, we have here, in the *Dublin Society*, the *Protestant Charter Schools*, the *Linen Manufactory*, the several *Charitable Societies*, and the *University*, remarkable Instances of Royal, and Parliamentary Munificence : And we have now less reason than ever to suppose, that any Design calculated for publick Good, will not meet with suitable Encouragement.

Amongst

Amongst the Inducements to Individuals to become Members of such a Society, it will not be the least, that they have the Sanction of one of the best Parliaments that ever sat in *England* in the Precedent before quoted. Nor is there a *Prince of Wales* wanting of equal hopes, who would probably not think himself dishonoured by presiding over such a Society, and ensuring Success to their Endeavours. And sure there can be no doubt, but that a Society, established to bring about a Point productive of such publick and private Advantages, would be as usefully, as nobly, and as honourably employed, as any other Society whatsoever.

If it be useful, by the Encouragement of Agriculture, to improve the insensible Earth; by planting, and the Arts of Gardening, to adorn the Face of God's Creation, shall the Improvement of the Conscious *Owner* of the Land be deemed not worthy of Regard? Shall the care of Ornamenting the *Noblest* Work of God be thought superfluous? If the training of Horses, Dogs, and other Animals for the Use or Sport of Man; if the breeding of singing Birds; if the rearing of curious Flowers, be thought Objects not unworthy the Attention of many Societies, established for those Purposes, shall the Rearing and Training of their own Children, be considered by Parents as a Matter of less Importance? If it be laudable to encourage the liberal Arts, shall it be a Work without Praise, to inspire those, for whose Use and Delight, these Arts are encouraged, with a true Taste and Relish for them.

If it be noble to erect stately Structures, Temples of Lime and Stone in Honour of the Deity, shall it be less glorious to build up Man? To raise up living
Temples,

Temples, to the living God, and make them worthy of his Presence ?

In short, would not a Society established with a View to supply the Wants, improve the Faculties, and administer to the Enjoyments of the rational, the intellectual, the immortal part of Man, be as honourably employed, as any of those who have only for their Objects the animal, the sensual, the perishable Part ?

It is not much to the Honour of these Realms, it is no favourable Omen of our future Prosperity, that whilst our Neighbours, the once despised *French*, by a Number of Academies, and Societies, are labouring to cultivate, and improve every Faculty of the Soul, we should be wholly absorbed in the Care of the Body.

Let it be the Glory, let it be the Boast of this Country, that of the *British* Dominions, IRELAND first led the Way, in an Institution the best calculated to revive the antient Honour of these Realms ; to prevent the Shame, as well as Ruin which an acknowledged Superiority in our Rivals must in Time bring upon us ; to disappoint the ambitious Views of our ancient and avowed Enemies ; and in short, to dignify human Nature, and do Honour to God.

A Society of this kind would probably soon become the Parent of many others, and in a short Space of Time diffuse a general Blessing throughout these Realms.

Upon the whole, if the Scheme appears chimerical, useless, or irrational, let it perish, let it be obliterated, let no Memorial of it remain. But if otherwise,

wife, may the Author of all good Works, inspire your Hearts with an ardent Zeal, to promote an Undertaking which will redound so much to your own Honour; which will be productive of such Benefit to the rising Generation, and hand down such Blessings to Posterity. May every true Lover of his Country, contribute all in his Power to raise *Ireland* to her former State of Splendor, when the Youth of *Europe* crowded to her from all Sides for Education; when, like a Lamp set on high, she illuminated the Nations all around, when she had the glorious Appellation of the *Island of Saints*.

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